https://www.financial-planning.com/news/prudential-kicks-off-advisor-program-to-better-serve-hispanic-clients

Prudential kicks off advisor program to better serve Hispanic clients
By Rob Burgess
September 16, 2024, 6:00 a.m. EDT

A new program seeks to help advisors better understand Hispanic clients, who traditionally have been an underserved market.

Prudential is launching a new Hispanic Market Certification Program for the firm's advisors this week, as Hispanic Heritage Month begins.

Hispanic consumers represent roughly 20% of the U.S. population, and have $3.4 trillion in purchasing power, according to Prudential.

The program includes self-paced certification training that ties cultural awareness with targeted marketing strategies.

The announcement comes on the heels of a similar Prudential certification program, Blueprint to Black Wealth, designed to train advisors to better serve Black consumers and households.

Hasan Ibrahim, central territory vice president for Prudential Advisors, is a Cuban American and has been championing this new program at a corporate level. He said hundreds of the company's advisors have already signed up.

"What we want is not just our Hispanic advisors to take this or be a part of this, but all of our advisors," he said. "You don't have to be part of that community to engage."

Build trust and relationships to overcome unique challenges
Louis Barajas,co-founder of International Private Wealth Advisors in Irvine, California, was one of the first Latino financial planners in the country and is now on the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards. He is currently starring on the PBS show "Opportunity Knocks" and is also the author of the book "The Latino Journey to Financial Greatness."

Barajas said advisors can best serve Latino clients by meeting them where they are and not trying to undermine cultural values.

The unique challenges are that they tend to lack significant assets and income, and there may be a lack of generational wealth in their families, he said.

"There is a need for more hand-holding and explaining certain basic concepts to make sure that they understand what they are executing with the advisor," he said. "They tend to not ask questions and rely on the advisor. You overcome the obstacles by building a relationship of curiosity and learn what is important to

them and why it's important to them. Also, listening carefully to superstitions or limiting cultural beliefs about money."

Emmanuel Eliason, president and CEO of Eliason Wealth Managementin Centennial, Colorado, works with the immigrant community from Africa in addition to some Hispanic clients. Being an immigrant from Ghana helps him understand the unique needs of these clients.

"They have similar challenges," he said.

Eliason said to better serve Hispanics, advisors should begin by emphasizing relevant financial education.

"Whether helping them understand their employer 401(k) benefits, how to build or repair credit, various college saving options or investing for the future, these critical topics will allow them to build a strong financial foundation," he said. "Advisors should also make it a point to build trust by truly caring about their needs and goals, family situation and aspirations. This will allow Hispanics to be open to discussing an intimate topic like their finances with a stranger, who may most likely not be of their community or origin."

Language preferences can lead to prospects

Advisors who are certified in Prudential's new program will receive priority access to leads generated through Prudential's Spanish/English landing page, where consumers can choose to connect with a Spanish-speaking advisor.

Not all Hispanic Americans want to conduct their business in Spanish, Ibrahim said, but in his experience, some do.

Glenn J. Downing, founder and principal of CameronDowning in Miami, said advisors should take time to remember that Hispanic clients are far from a monolith.

"To listen to the press, Hispanic people are a voting bloc," he said. "Nothing could be further than the truth."

Downing said where he works in south Florida is a perfect example of this diversity.

"Whenever there is political uncertainty in South America, the wealthy folks from there come to Miami to buy apartments and send their children to college," he said. "This has happened over the decades, with the '60s dominated by Cubans, the '70s by Columbians and so on. Venezuelans continue to be the last big group to come in."

Many people in the Miami area are bilingual if not trilingual, with Brazilian Portuguese being the third most common language, said Downing.

"While Spanish is strictly not necessary in business, it is a help," he said. "In my firm of four advisors, I'm the only non-fluent Spanish speaker. [Right now] one of our advisors, who was born in Spain of Cuban parents, is conducting a meeting with a Venezuelan client in Spanish. The client is completely fluent in English, but they are more comfortable together in their native tongue. … Advisors still serve the same market segments — middle class, upper middle class and wealthy — regardless of the native language of the client."